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This article was written in the first half of 1996; much new data has come out since, though none of it seriously affects the hypothesis proposed here. The text here should therefore be considered a preliminary draft of the authors beliefs about Roswell.

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ROSWELL: Truth and Consequences

by Martin Cannon

Part I

The 1947 "UFO" crash at Roswell, New Mexico is the case which revitalized and revolutionized ufology. The investigators have withstood many attacks; "Roswologists" (if I can be forgiven such a ghastly coinage) have taken a drumming and kept on humming. Saucer fans fixate upon each detail of the incident like mystics contemplating the stations of the cross, and God help the writer who hints at an explanation divergent from the "UC" (ufologically correct) interpretation.

Until recently, my interests have focused not so much on the Roswell inquiry as on its sequelae. Ever since 1979, when author William Moore rediscovered the case, bizarre and elaborate deception operations followed upon his find like boxcars after a locomotive engine. As we shall see in the next chapter, a pattern emerged during the 1980s: Mysterious sources boasting military credentials would meet with writers and journalists and relate astounding tales about governmental interaction with alien races -- an interaction which, these sources claimed, began with Roswell. While such fables initially took in the more gullible saucer buffs, most now agree that these sources were feeding ufologists a steady diet of red herring.

The "UC" explanation for these hoaxes holds that the Roswell testimony constitutes the long-sought proof of alien visitation, which government operatives have sought to bury under a barrage of disinformation. I disagree with this view. The evidence proffered by Roswologists allows for a possible terrestrial solution, one not-unrelated to the history of MKULTRA. If this solution is correct, Roswell

was indeed a scandal, though not one of extraterrestrial origin.

I can hear the groans: Not another Roswell theory... Many have championed their own explanatory scenarios, and, so far, none has triumphed over the extraterrestrial hypothesis. But this entrant may prove a hardier competitor, and deserves its day in the arena.

Although Roswell has received wide publicity, and has even inspired an enjoyable made-for-cable film, many readers may not yet have the basics. Therefore, I offer a precis, based on published and privately-distributed materials, and on my discussions with various researchers.

The Roswell Catechism

According to the accepted wisdom, a wayward alien craft exploded during a thunderstorm on either July 2 or July 4, 1947). Debris rained over a sheep ranch belonging to W.W. "Mac" Brazel, 10 miles northwest of Roswell and 30 miles southwest of Corona. The next morning, Brazel and his sons discovered a field filled with shards of an extremely light-weight metal and a foil-like substance surprisingly resistant to tearing or wrinkling. A sledgehammer couldn't dent the stuff, and a cigarette lighter couldn't burn it.

The ranch had no telephone, so Brazel did not report his find until he made a trip to the city on July 6. After a quick chat with the local Sheriff, the rancher briefed Major Jesse Marcel, chief intelligence officer at the local Army Air Base -- home of the 509th Bomb group, specially trained to deliver atomic payloads. After consulting higher authority, Marcel received orders to investigate the crash site; Captain Sheridan "Cav" Cavitt, a counterintelligence specialist, tagged along.

On July 7, at the ranch, Marcel found the inexplicable foil and a flexible material similar to balsa wood, but much stronger, imprinted with pink and purple "heiroglyphics." He also found scattered shards of an unusually resilient substance like Bakelite or plastic. That evening, Marcel took some of this material home, showed it to his wife and son, and enthusiastically announced that he had found the remains of a crashed flying saucer.

Later, a team of soldiers scooped up the wreckage, brought it back to the base and loaded it aboard a B-29, which flew to Fort Worth, Texas. The debris went on to Ohio's Wright Field (later re-named Wright-Patterson). Apparently, the military used heavy-handed tactics to convince Brazel that silence would be the better part of patriotism.

On July 8, the public information officer at Roswell base, Walter Haut, issued a press release stating that the 509th had recovered a flying saucer. Haut's superiors quickly squelched the report; his military career didn't last much longer. To fend off reporters' inquiries, the military needed to come up with a clever diversion, and fast. Thus, at Fort Worth, Brigadier General Roger Ramey announced that the wreckage was simply a downed weather balloon. He even allowed newsmen to photograph Marcel and others posing with the recovered "balloon" pieces. The unlucky Marcel became the scapegoat -- the Air Force intelligence officer who couldn't even recognize a downed weather balloon.

Ramey's story held until the late 1970s, when researcher William Moore, journalist Bob Pratt, engineer Stanton Friedman and the indefatigable Leonard Stringfield gave the matter a fresh look. Marcel, still alive at that time, admitted that the "weather balloon" story was phoney, and insisted that the debris came from somewhere other than Earth. Moore co-wrote a book called the Roswell Incident with Charles Berlitz, whose well-known name helped garner a sizable advance. The book mixes solid facts with silly rumors, a situation Moore blames on his former partner. Still, the basic story got out, and other researchers became interested.

The Problem Photographs

According to Moore and his close associate, television producer Jaime Shandera, the material photographed in Ramey's office back in 1947 was the actual debris from Marcel's ranch. Most other ufologists believe that the photographs actually depict an unrelated downed weather balloon, which Ramey sneakily substituted for the real thing.

Moore backs his version of events with statements from Jesse Marcel and then-Colonel Thomas J. DuBose, who both appear in the controversial photos. If their assertions are true -- if even one of those images depicts the actual wreckage found on Brazel's ranch -- then the Roswell case receives a punishing (though not necessarily mortal) blow. The silvery stuff in the photos simply doesn't look like saucer shearings: The miraculous, "invulnerable" substance appears very wrinkled and torn.

Air Force Captain Kevin Randle, who has written extensively about Roswell, insists that the photographs depict a substituted weather balloon. Unfortunately, Randle backs his version by citing an interview with Walter Haut, who reportedly got the story from Jesse Marcel. Since Haut was not in the room (or even in Fort Worth) when the photographs were taken, the direct testimony of Marcel and

DuBose should, arguably, take precedence over Haut's recollections. When Randle and his former partner Don Schmitt published their initial research into Roswell, Jaime Shandera sent a harshly-worded reply, focusing primarily on the issue of first-hand vs. second-hand testimony. While much of Randle's work is admirable, Moore and Shandera have, on this score, raised a fair point, and one can only wonder why Randle's books refuse to acknowledge the fact that this dispute exists. Apparently, he has decided to ignore any and all Roswell data collected by Bill Moore, who has become a controversial figure due to his claimed involvement with a group of intelligence operatives, as well as his suspected authorship of the "MJ-12" documents. (We will soon discuss these matters at greater length.) But does the Moore imbroglio justify tossing out tape-recorded testimony from key witnesses Marcel and DuBose?

Oddly, one of the photographs depicts Marcel smiling, looking quite as proud as a fisherman with a prize catch. If his superior had ordered him to pose with substituted material as part of a cover story -- one which makes him appear rather foolish -- then he would probably have worn a different expression: dour, embarrassed, serious.

The Mogul hypothesis

While all now agree that something unusual fell on Brazel's ranch, not everyone endorses the extraterrestrial explanation. In 1994, after prodding from New Mexico Congressman Steven Schiff, the DOD came up with a revised standard version of the Roswell incident: The crashed object was constructed for a top-secret balloon project called "Mogul."

Project Mogul studied the phenomenon of atmospheric sound channels, at one time a highly-classified subject. At a certain level in the atmosphere, sound waves travel extremely far. The scientists involved in Mogul hoped to use constant-level balloons to "overhear" possible nuclear explosions emanating from the Soviet Union (which did not yet possess the bomb but was working toward that goal).

Many ufologists are under the impression that the Mogul theory originated with the military. Actually, the idea was first explored in 1990 by ufologists Peter Gersten and Robert Todd, who -- after acquiring a number of Mogul documents on microfilm -- discovered that a cluster of ten polyethylene balloons was launched from Holloman Air Force Base on July 3, 1947. Did that experiment also launch the Roswell tale...?

To counter this suggestion, partisans of the extraterrestrial hypothesis noted that

the debris found on the ranch scarcely resembled polyethylene (which Moore, in a conversation with me, derisively called "saran wrap"). An April 19, 1949 document, sent to the Air Force's Project "Grudge" (an early UFO study) from Captain A.C. Trakowski of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, broadly addresses the question of whether secret balloon launches could have caused UFO reports. While the analysis does not mention Mogul by name, the June 3 launch is referenced. The balloons went down shortly after take-off. Although the material was not recovered, airplanes spotted it in a remote canyon, located many miles away from the Brazel spread.

Thus ended the Mogul idea -- until the Department of Defense revived it. Their new, improved theory relies on the recollections of Professor Charles B. Moore (no relation to Bill Moore) of the Langmuir Laboratory for Atmospheric Research in Socorro, New Mexico. Professor Moore, now in his 80s, was in charge of the 1947 Mogul balloon launches. No-one can fairly call him a saucer debunker, since he reported a still-unexplained UFO in 1949, and counted J. Allen Hynek among his friends.

In correspondence with iconoclastic researcher Jim Moseley, Professor Moore has argued that the Brazel debris probably resulted from a July 4 balloon launch intended to test a new type of radar target, not used with conventional weather balloons. "The people who had previously found radiosondes and weather balloon debris would not have recognized the ML-306/AP targets because they would not have seen them before." These targets were composed of an unusual material which, according to one balloon expert I spoke with, combined aluminum foil and wax paper. Professor Moore reports that the reinforcement tape had designs printed on it (consisting of squares, diamonds, flowers, circles, etc.), possibly accounting for the "heiroglyphics."

Although the actual Mogul balloons were made of the then-new material polyethylene, the scientists decided to use standard balloons -- composed of neoprene, a rubber-like substance -- for initial tests of this new radar target. In June of 1947, an ML-306/AP device was attached to a cluster of neoprene balloons and launched from Alamogordo Army Air Force Base. As the balloons ascended, the neoprene expanded and burst; the cluster descended, and dragged the ML-306/AP along the desert floor. Brazel found the results.

Or so runs the theory...

The Roswell Daily Record of July 9, 1947 printed an interview with Brazel, who described the substance as "smoky grey in color." "That," said Professor Moore in

1994, "is exactly how I would describe the color of neoprene rubber balloons that have been stretched (as occurs in ascending to high altitudes) and exposed to direct sunlight for several hours." Roswell proponents counter that military officers accompanied Brazel during this interview (conducted on the evening of the 8th), indicating that the rancher recited a cover story under duress.

Initially, the Mogul theory seems quite attractive, since it explains the debris, its shipment to Wright Field, and the ensuing cover-up. But closer examination raises serious objections.

Could Jesse Marcel have mistaken Mogul material for a crashed saucer? Proponents of the extraterrestrial hypothesis point out that he learned all about the secret balloon launches in 1948, and therefore would not have remained confused about the origin of Mogul balloon debris. Marcel certainly should have recognized neoprene. Brazel's ranch became the repository for a very large amount of material -- more, surely, than one shredded radiosonde (however novel the design) could account for. And according to Professor Moore, the rigid beams were made of "balsa (or other light wood)," which scarcely corresponds with Marcel's description: "...solid members that you could not bend or break but it didn't look like metal."

The hieroglyphics pose a special problem: In his controversial interview with the Roswell Daily Record, Mac Brazel reported that "Considerable scotch tape and some tape with flowers printed on it had been used," while Jesse Marcel Jr. (now Dr. Marcel) has recalled "different geometric shapes, leaves, and symbols." These descriptions broadly accord with Professor Moore's. The elder Marcel, however, reported that the writing on the rigid struts seemed to represent a complex, unknown language comparable to Chinese.

In 1995, the Air Force released a report arguing that the Roswell debris resulted from the crash of Mogul balloon Flight No. 4, launched a month earlier. But Randle has uncovered good evidence that this cluster carried no array train, and thus could not have caused the debris.

Perhaps the most damaging argument against the Mogul theory derives from the fact that great secrecy did not surround the materials used in the Mogul balloon clusters. Launches connected to Mogul were photographed, and pictures of the balloons were printed in local newspapers. The Trakowski document cited earlier was never "top secret," even though it describes a Mogul launch. Only the objective of the program was highly classified.

Why, then, did military authorities throw up a cordon around the crash site? Why was the debris at the Air Base moved to bomb pit number one, which previously stored only weapons? Why did military personnel demand the small amount of debris which Brazel had given to the Sheriff? Why do we have so many credible reports that witnesses -- including the Sheriff -- were threatened with death or imprisonment if they talked? Why was Brazel detained for nearly a week? Why did paranoia about the recovered material reach such outlandish heights?

And why, years later (in the summer of 1949) did the military demand a few scraps of debris still possessed by Brazel's son? By this time, the Soviet Union had detonated an atomic device, and the secret Mogul sought to discover was secret no more.

The Mogul theory is fetching, and explains much -- but not all. The origin of the debris remains enigmatic. But was it extraterrestrial?

Habeas Corpus

All terrestrial explanations would immediately fall to shreds if someone could prove the nag-ging reports that searchers in 1947 found actual alien bodies. After the television program Unsolved Mysteries aired a segment on Roswell in 1990, a colorful yarn-spinner named Gerry Anderson came forward, claiming to have seen -- when he was all of five years old -- a crashed ship and alien bodies on the Plains of San Augustin, over 100 miles away from Brazel's spread. He backed this tall tale with a "diary," which analysis proved to be written with a pen and ink not produced until at least 1970. Anderson's former wife and co-workers have labeled him a habitual liar.

Anderson cribbed part of his fable from the already-published story of Grady L. "Barney" Barnett, a soil conservation engineer. Barnett died in 1969, before Roswell research began, but his friends L.W. Maltais and J.F. Danley later stepped forward and maintained that, on July 3, 1947, Barnett encountered a crashed disk, complete with alien bodies, on the Plains of San Augustin, near Magdalena. A team of university archeologists just happened to show up in this spot at that moment; they too saw the wreckage. Soon thereafter, a red-haired military man appeared, and swore all the witnesses to secrecy. Army personnel from Roswell then scooped up the bodies and the wreckage.

So Barnett claimed -- or rather, so Barnett's associates claimed he claimed. But all this information arrives second-hand, and relies on decades-old memories. Proponents ask us to believe that the military let Barnett and co. go on their way

with little more than a warning, even though authorities placed rancher "Mac" Brazel (whose find was, by comparison, much less spectacular) in rough detention for nearly a week. None of the archeologists have ever come forward. Kevin Randle has uncovered a diary kept by Barnett's wife, which notes that he spent July 3-7, 1947 in the office. (The earliest proposed time for the crash was the night of July 2.) Randle now discounts the entire tale of a second crash site near Magdalena, since no reliable first-hand eyewitnesses have come forward, and even the second-hand testimony has proven dubious.

However: According to Randle, there was a genuine second crash site much closer to Roswell -- specifically, some 35 miles northwest of the Army Air field. At this site, the military discovered the bulk of the craft, as well as a (varying) number of alien bodies. A number of witnesses have come forward to substantiate this claim. Some of these witnesses are hard to dismiss -- although skeptics, needless to say, remain skeptical.

Debunkers point out that ufology is now a business in the city of Roswell, NM, which boasts two museums attracting some 20,000 visitors a year. All those tourists spend money on museum donations, books, souvenirs, gasoline, motel rooms, stuffed sopapillas, and so forth. That sort of financial injection can mean a lot to the economy of a small, isolated town -- leading Phil Klass and others to argue that some UFO crash witnesses may be motivated by something other than the quest for truth.

Take, for example, the tale of Jim Ragsdale. Kevin Randle accepts his story (corroborated by family members) that, on the night of July 4, 1947, he and a ladyfriend witnessed the crash and discovered alien bodies and a battered spacecraft; the military immediately arrived, scaring the couple off. Klass counters that Ragsdale has, in different interviews, switched the main crash site by at least 50 miles. Moreover, this witness now also reports finding 15 golden "alien" helmets, which he buried in the desert! (Tourists, bring your metal detectors...)

Ragsdale's major claim -- that the military found alien bodies immediately after the crash -- contrasts sharply with the testimony of Glenn Dennis. In 1947, Dennis was a young mortician employed by the Ballard funeral home, which had an exclusive contract with Roswell Army Air Field. In the first Randle/Schmitt book, Dennis claims that Roswell authorities wanted three small caskets (or possibly one hermetically-sealed casket) sufficient to preserve three bodies "that had been out on the prairie for a couple of days, maybe a week." The former mortician has told differing stories as to whether the military men actually took

any child-sized caskets.

Dennis, whom all Roswell researchers consider a key witness, tells an even more interesting tale. He had befriended (and perhaps was engaged to) a nurse who worked at the base hospital, who asked to meet Dennis on July 6 at the Officer's Club. Demanding secrecy, she told Dennis that unfamiliar doctors had autopsied an alien creature, who possessed four fingers (but no thumbs) with suction-cup tips.

Shortly after this revelatory conversation at the Officer's Club, the nurse was transferred to England. Dennis later received a notice that she had died in the crash of a military airplane. At least, such was the tale Dennis told investigators for the Fund for UFO Research. In another interview, he said that he heard that the nurse did not die in 1947, but became a nun and died later.

With just a smidgen of rationalization, one can, I suppose, iron out these discrepancies. But Dennis' story still has one basic problem: The nurse is a phantom, bereft of traceable family or documentation. Dennis has told some researchers the woman bore the unlikely name of Naomi Maria Selff. The double-f in this name hints that Dennis may be an aficionado of anagrams; possible source phrases include "I'm a NASA life-form," "I'm false, of airman," "Am I of alien farms?" or (my favorite) "Affirm Anomalies." Whatever the onomastics of the case, no evidence indicates that such a person ever existed; Roswell has had a Selff-less history. If Dennis gave a phony name, why won't he divulge the true one?

Another concern: This witness happens to be a life-long friend of Walter Haut, the Roswell public information officer who started it all (and who now runs one of Roswell's UFO museums). Yet Haut told Philip Klass that Dennis never mentioned any of this business until late 1988 or early 1989.

We will not even go into the case of one prominent crash eyewitness, a former Air Force captain who gave his rank as "General" to a Roswell researcher. Problems of varying testimony and imploding witness credibility have prompted Jenny Randles, Britain's premiere ufologist, to offer the following observations:

Frankly, I worry that what is a credible story is in danger of being sunk by an over-abundance of witnesses and testimony. There can be little doubt that some jokers will have entered the fray once the case received big publicity. It is certainly difficult to know these days who is being sincere and who, to be blunt, is riding the bandwagon of publicity...

As you walk down the streets of Roswell, listen closely and you'll hear the ghost of Jimmy Durante remind you that "Evrabody wants ta get into da act!"

Still, even a deck three-quarters filled with jokers might have an ace or two left in it. And some of the "second site" witnesses are difficult to ignore. For example, Don Ecker (a careful researcher) interviewed a witness named Thomas Gonzalez, who claims that he attended the retrieval of alien corpses from the crash site. Another individual, Steve MacKenzie, has reported in a sworn affidavit that he tracked the object on radar, and later saw five dead aliens at the crash locale, including one with a "serene" look on its face.

Sergeant Melvin E. Brown, stationed at the base, guarded a truck carrying items removed from the crash site. Reportedly, Brown pulled back a tarpaulin and caught a glimpse of alien cadavers; their yellowish, leathery epidermis resembled a beaded reptilian skin. Unfortunately, we don't have this testimony from Brown himself, who died in 1986; the reports come from his daughter Beverly Bean, who says that her father gingerly began to discuss Roswell circa 1980, after the initial printed accounts appeared. The Roswell literature does not clarify how much of the Brown story comes from the period of his final illness.

Captain Oliver "Pappy" Henderson, of Roswell's First Air Transport Unit, reportedly flew UFO debris to Wright Air Field. Again, the primary witness is deceased: The information comes to us by way of his wife, Sappho Henderson, who reports that her late husband began to talk about the subject when a tabloid mentioned the Roswell crash in 1980. Captain Henderson told her that the tabloid's description of the bodies was accurate. Randle accepts that Henderson saw the bodies himself; however, Joe Stefula (a more skeptical investigator) believes that, regarding the bodies, Henderson may have reported what he heard from another source.

Whitley Streiber and Kevin Randle set great store by the testimony of Brigadier General Arthur Exon. More skeptical investigators wonder whether Exon speaks of things he experienced personally, or whether he is simply reporting what he heard from others -- for example, from Captain Henderson, who was Exon's good friend for a number of years. There's a difference between confirmation and repetition of witness testimony.

Part II

The Problem of Marcel's Ignorance

Can we blithely discount all of the witnesses to the second crash site and recovered alien cadavers? No. Individually, certain testimonials may present problems; collectively, they are impossible to ignore. Neither, alas, can we embrace these tales -- not even the very best of them. All are undercut by a significant flaw, a flaw which Randle, for reasons best known to himself, never addresses in his books.

If, as the witnesses claim, Roswell personnel recovered bodies on July 4 or July 5, why didn't Jesse Marcel know?

He was, after all, the chief intelligence officer at the base. Surely, he had need to know. Surely, any nearby crash (terrestrial or non-) would be impossible to hide from him. If, as Randall believes, Roswell soldiers went out by the jeep-ful on July 4 to gather flying saucer wreckage, Marcel would probably have been out directing traffic. All the furious activity described by the "second site" witnesses -- a massive retrieval operation, special storage of debris, alien autopsies, perhaps the capture of a live alien -- undoubtedly would have come to the Major's attention, and would have figured in the interviews he gave many years later.

But Randle and other Roswell proponents would have us think otherwise. We are supposed to believe that during all this extraordinary activity, Jesse Marcel -- the base's primary intelligence officer -- stood by like the proverbial potted plant, blissfully ignorant of his surroundings.

In point of fact, Marcel does not enter the picture until the afternoon of July 6, when rancher Brazel spoke to him. The next day, July 7, the Major and Cavitt examined the site, and Marcel became very excited to discover what he believed to be the remains of a flying saucer. He showed the material to his family, something he would not have done if high security measures already surrounded such matters. Kevin Randle himself tells us that, according to Marcel, the recovered wreckage became classified after July 7.

Let us suppose that Marcel's superiors, for some inexplicable reason, decided to keep the chief intelligence officer at Roswell "out of the loop." Let us suppose that, throughout July 4-6, Colonel Blanchard kept sending Major Marcel out for coffee and donuts while the boys back at the base hauled in the crashed spaceship and the alien corpses. Why, then, did the Colonel later allow -- no, order -- Marcel to examine the Brazel debris field? If Marcel couldn't be trusted with this sort of information on July 5, what made him trustworthy on July 7?

And if, on July 5, the highest secrecy surrounded the main crash site, why was

the unfortunate Haut ordered, on July 8, to announce the capture of a flying saucer, accomplished with the help of a local rancher? Why did Haut's press release speak openly of the Brazel find, and not of the more important discoveries which allegedly preceded it?

Kevin Randle, Donald Schmitt, and other Roswologists deal with this issue by never raising it, in the apparent hope that readers won't notice the omission. That tactic simply won't do. Even more troubling is the tactic employed by the made-for-cable dramatization Roswell, and by the video documentary UFO Secret: The Roswell Crash (which lists Schmitt and Randle as the production's chief investigators). These influential presentations pretend that the second site was discovered after the Marcel crash was reported. Moreover, both the film and the documentary never allude to the controversy surrounding the location of the second debris field, leaving viewers with the false impression that the Barnett site is the same as the one identified by the Randle/Schmitt witnesses.

When Roswell researchers are privately confronted with the problem of Marcel's ignorance, they usually mutter something along these lines: "Well, maybe Marcel kept the events of July 4 and 5 secret, even after he decided to talk about the Brazel material." But why? Why would he reveal the truth about the "extraterrestrial" debris on Brazel's ranch, yet withhold all information concerning site #2? If the late Jesse Marcel was less than candid in his interviews, do we even have a Roswell case left?

Indeed, ufologist Robert Todd - not a hard-core UFO skeptic - has made the case that Jesse Marcel occasionally embellished the truth in his interviews. For example, Marcel claimed to have received five Air Medals for shooting down five enemy planes during World War II combat missions. According to Todd, Marcel was never a gunner or pilot, and received only two Air Medals - neither one for a shoot-down. Marcel also once claimed to have written the statement which President Truman read on the air after the USSR exploded a nuclear device. In fact, Truman did not take to the airwaves on that occasion, which prompted only a written announcement from the White House.

Robert Todd has uncovered further evidence of Marcel's propensity for exaggeration. Todd's report is, at this writing, quite new - and undoubtedly his attack will prompt a brisk defensive strike from Roswell partisans, who may yet win this particular battle. But even if we can favorably resolve the issue of Marcel's honesty, the issue of Marcel's ignorance remains a sticking point. If a second crash site existed close to the Roswell base, why didn't the Major know?

Until someone resolves that conundrum, we must put "on hold" all the testimony from second-site witnesses, and all the testimony of recovered ETs. The only proven wreckage remains that found on Brazel's ranch. The first site is the only site.

Flying Saucer -- or "Flying Cow"?

Back we come to the old question: Just what caused all that wreckage on Mac Brazel's land?

We have already examined, and rejected, the Mogul explanation. Skeptic Ron Schaffner has proposed that a wayward V2 rocket caused the debris, while Fortean John Keel has speculated that a Japanese "Fugo" balloon bomb somehow drifted over New Mexico two years after the war. Randle and others have argued persuasively against the Fugo thesis, and there is no need to recapitulate their points here. As for the V2: Schaffner's opponents feel that descriptions of the recovered materials do not tally with what one might expect from such a source. No known V2 launch corresponds with the date of the Roswell crash. Besides, the press openly reported other V2 rocket accidents, which makes the paranoiac secrecy surrounding the Brazel find seem rather absurd.

In his book *Revelations*, computer scientist Jacques Vallee offered a suggestion which at first struck me as rather too speculative. Now, after further research, I feel that he came closest to the truth.

Vallee posits that the debris came from a special floating drone designed to test radioactivity; these were, after all, the days of open A-bomb tests. The technology of the time could have produced Roswell-type material: "Aluminized Saran...was paper-thin, was not dented by a hammer blow, and was restored to a smooth finish after crushing."

Did such drones exist? Indeed so.

The Navy possessed jet-type drone airplanes which took air samples during the 1946 Hydrogen bomb tests on Bikini atoll. Some of these drones even carried passengers -- test animals, flown through the clouds rising after an atomic explosion. We know that at least one such drone was lost in the New Mexican desert in 1960, due to equipment failure.

None of this is very surprising. But few people know about the proposed use of drone aircraft to deliver weapons of mass destruction.

Well before the first atomic explosion at Trinity, New Mexico, in 1945, American strategists seriously considered the military uses of Plutonium and other highly radioactive materials -- not as key ingredients in the bomb-maker's recipe book, but as weapons in and of themselves. Such substances are so very toxic that a small amount can do severe damage to a large city. All one needs is a means to deliver and disperse the goods.

The proposed use radioactivity as a weapon of mass destruction is one reason why American scientists were so intent on measuring the dispersal patterns of airborne particles. Throughout the 1940s, Los Alamos National Laboratories conducted a number of open-air radioactivity releases throughout the late 1940 - perhaps as many as 250 - and the effects were measured many miles away. Nor was Los Alamos the only New Mexican locale chosen for such studies. That state's vast desert expanses -- sparsely populated, yet home to key military installations -- provided an ideal site for such tests.

Delivery remained a conundrum. Radioactive gases were all very fine, but how could one get them over enemy skies?

A government report dated July 3, 1948 lists a number of options (rockets, fragmentation bombs, sprays from aircraft, etc.), and rejects most of them. But the final delivery option -- "Use of Drone Planes" -- elicits the following commentary: "As a result of discussions with representatives of the Air Corps, it is believed that the use of drone planes to transport the radioactive materials, and dispersed by one or more of the methods described above, may prove to be the most practical. The main advantage lies in the fact that the shielding problems are greatly simplified." This same report, under the heading "Method of Delivery," notes that "It is now believed that high altitude missions are the type that merit the most attention." (*Italics added.*)

For all weapons of mass destruction, the big problem wasn't creating the parcel, but mailing it. Nowadays, most people tend to forget that American bombers in 1947 were capable of only a limited penetration into the vast Soviet territory, even when the planes were launched from bases in Turkey; this is the primary reason why Stalin fought to surround his country with compliant buffer states. An aircraft such as the Enola Gay might not reach Moscow. But a high-altitude, floating drone -- a helium-filled craft, or a hybrid craft -- could do the job. Moreover, such a vehicle could deliver a payload which might prove fatal to a conventional aircraft's crew members.

Interestingly, Professor Moore (of Mogul fame) once participated in an effort

which used lighter-than-air craft to penetrate "unfriendly" skies. He has told one interviewer that he prepared a "balloon bomb" designed to deliver propaganda leaflets to the people of Hungary, just prior to their unfortunate 1956 uprising. Indeed, as far back as World War II, balloons were used to deliver propaganda broadsides (as part of "Operation Sykewar") over German cities.

If fairly conventional balloon clusters could rain leaflets fairly accurately, deep within enemy territory, we can fairly deduce that more advanced types of lighter-than-air craft could haul deadly substances across national boundaries. We can also fairly presume that such a device would have been tested on American soil, using unwitting human beings as test subjects. In those days, tests involving radiation were considered so important that the scientists involved took little heed of ethical constraints. For example: In 1947, the same year as the Roswell crash, government-funded scientists deliberately injected plutonium into the left leg of an African-American railroad porter named Elmer Allen. A few days later, the doctors removed the leg for study, having falsely assured Allen that a bone cancer made amputation necessary. There are many, many more such stories.

The craft which came down on Brazel's farm may thus have been a drone -- something akin to a miniature dirigible, or blimp -- designed either to measure or to deliver radioactive particles. Granted, the Roswell literature reports that Jesse Marcel checked the debris field with a radiation detector, and found no signs of radioactivity. But this fact need not invalidate our hypothesis. If the drone carried a radiation measurement device, it may not yet have reached its destination. If the craft carried a delivery device, the radioactive "payload" could have remained intact within its sealed container (a fortunate circumstance for Marcel and Brazel).

Or -- quite possibly -- the payload was not radioactive at all.

The concept of Plutonium-as-weapon forces us to consider all the other methodologies of "toxic warfare." Every schoolchild knows that the great powers have experimented with chemical and biological warfare agents since the infamous mustard gas attacks of World War I. During the 1950s, CBW research went arm-and-arm with the drug experimentation conducted pursuant to MKULTRA.

As always, the problem of delivery confronted the strategic planners. During World War II, the British facility at Porton Down conducted a massive research program into chemical warfare, and concocted an unmanned "gliding bomb" designed to rain thickened mustard gas behind enemy lines. This device -- which,

without stretching definitions too far, might be considered an aerial drone -- was jovially nicknamed the "Flying Cow." (A similar device, which sprayed unthickened mustard gas, was called the "Flying Laboratory.")

Jeremy Paxman and Robert Harris fill many a chapter of their excellent book *A Higher Form of Killing* with unnerving descriptions of mustard gas launchers, anthrax bombs, radiation gas bombs, and even less pleasant inventions. Most Americans do not realize the scope of this research. One facility -- the arsenal at Pine Bluff, Arkansas -- spent half-a-billion dollars on chemical and biological weaponry during World War II (when a dollar went much farther than it does today), and Pine Bluff was scarcely America's only research center dedicated to such grim studies. After the war, the United States commandeered the results of the large-scale CBW research programs undertaken by Germany and Japan, and by our British allies.

Paxman and Harris describe how American and British scientists, often in contravention of both ethics and common sense, sprayed disease-laden clouds over populated areas. These mock attacks, which usually utilized non-fatal germs such as brucellosis, were meant to simulate enemy attacks using more deadly substances, such as sarin. The most infamous of these mock attacks occurred in 1950, when minesweepers exposed all residents of San Francisco to clouds containing two allegedly "harmless" bacteria, *Bacillus globigii* and *Serratia marcescans*.

It was all very easy for the military to attack San Francisco, but how (in 1947) could they hope to drench Moscow in clouds of toxicity? (The reader will recall the problem posed by limited bomber range.) Drone aircraft -- particularly of the lighter-than-air variety -- neatly resolved this quandry.

Of course, officials needed to test such a delivery system -- covertly. The released documents on radiation testing repeatedly emphasize the secrecy which surrounded all experiments involving unwitting subjects, particularly civilian test subjects. As noted previously, the sparsely-populated American desert provided an excellent environment for such tests.

One can easily comprehend why test planners would want to target a population under military control. Military physicians could track human susceptibility to an airborne germ. "Coincidentally" or otherwise, the Brazel ranch is located quite near Fort Stanton Mesa, an old military outpost commanded by Kit Carson during the Indian wars. By the time of the Spanish-American War, this facility was converted to use as an army hospital. During World War II, soldiers suffering

from combat fatigue and other psychological ailments were remanded here. Researcher Kathy Kasten visited Fort Stanton Mesa, and toured the facility's cemetery. She noted with great interest the sharp increase in deaths in the 1947-51 period.

In short: The area northwest of Roswell Army Air Field was the ideal location for secret aerial testing of health-impacting substances.

In my opinion, the craft which crashed onto Mac Brazel's field was a drone, perhaps involved with airborne radiation tests, more likely involved with CBW testing. The "Flying Cow" sired at Porton Down had offspring, one of which probably ended up on a New Mexican ranch.

A drone of this sort would necessarily be constructed of the most durable -- yet most lightweight -- materials available. The enormous world-wide investment into CBW during WWII led to striking advances in materials science, as researchers on both sides of the conflict constantly improved designs for gas masks, protective clothing and other materials. The results of this research would, in all likelihood, have struck many members of the general public - and even many within the regular military - as impossibly futuristic.

Even the "hieroglyphics" found on the lightweight struts are not without explanation. Ironically, Kevin Randall and Don Schmitt touch on this explanation in their book *The Truth About the UFO Crash at Roswell*, which discusses the Japanese Fugo balloon bombs. Randall and Schmitt quote an expert named Robert Mikesch concerning the markings on Fugo balloon components: "While Japanese markings and stamps would normally be used to facilitate assembly of components, alphabetical letters and figures were used instead. No trace of the origin of the balloon was to be allowed...[for fear] of disclosing the manufacturing location or launch site, which would result in reprisal attacks by B-29s." Why wouldn't the American manufacturers of a lighter-than-air "secret weapon" incorporate a similar gambit? Imprinting drone components with an oriental language or a visual code (as opposed to plain English) would have given such craft plausible deniability, if ever one floated, intact, into the wrong hands.

Clouds of Secrecy

The "toxic drone" explanation elegantly resolves the problem of Marcel's ignorance. If a drone craft were spreading *Serratia marcescans* -- or worse -- over the New Mexican desert, Marcel would have no need to know the truth. Once his superiors determined the actual cause of the debris, they would certainly withhold

such knowledge from Major Marcel -- and from anyone else who touched the wreckage.

The reader will recall one important fact cited in a previous chapter: In 1947, the Supreme Court had not yet issued the *Feres* decision, and thus had not yet ruled on the right of an American soldier to sue the United States government. If Jesse Marcel ever learned the truth about the debris, he might not have taken kindly to the idea of serving as an unwitting test subject, especially if his wife and child were also within range of airborne bacteria or radioactive particles. Had Marcel known that the wreckage came from a craft which carried an infectious, radioactive or otherwise toxic agent, he surely would have prevented other soldiers from gathering up the material without protective clothing, and he would have required the Brazels to vacate the property temporarily. One can imagine the resultant publicity.

But the managers of the drone project encountered a stroke of luck: Marcel -- inspired by news accounts of flying saucer sightings -- jumped to the conclusion that the Brazel debris resulted from a wayward spacecraft. His superiors had no motive to disabuse him of this notion. Not for the last time, "flying saucers" proved an excellent cover story.

Of course, those in the know would have insisted upon the collection of every scrap of debris, even years later. Had even a tiny amount remained in the hands of, say, Brazel's son, someone might have suggested that the substance receive scientific testing. Analysis could have revealed some hint of the drone's original bacteriological or radioactive payload.

One can easily imagine the international outcry and blow to American prestige that would have resulted had the world learned, in 1947, of plans to attack the Soviet Union using drones laden with plutonium and other toxins. Friendly nations would have led the protest, since any accident involving such drones could have placed allied countries at risk. Indeed, the accident which caused the Brazel crash probably convinced U.S. military planners that high-altitude drones were simply too risky an option.

If my hypothesis is correct, the threat of scandal and legal challenge hid, and still hides, the truth about Roswell. The military has never wanted to become mired in any embarrassing lawsuits resulting from their open-air tests.

Keep in mind one important fact: Some activists in the San Francisco still hope to sue the United States government over the 1950 germ releases over that city.

Many believe that the bacteriological clouds were hardly so harmless as scientists then presumed; the experiments may have unleashed carcinogens on an unwitting populace, resulting in higher-than-normal cancer rates. Whether such concerns are valid or not is outside the scope of this inquiry. The important point is that cancer claims may yet lead to an expensive court battle, more than 45 years after the event.

One can, therefore, easily understand why the Pentagon would continue to hush up any similar releases in New Mexico. If newspapers suddenly announced that what happened to San Francisco in 1950 also happened to Roswell in 1947, the citizens of New Mexico would raise up a cry of outrage. In all likelihood, the families of anyone in that area who contracted cancer during the past half-century might come to believe -- rightly or wrongly -- that they have legal standing to bring suit against the government. The results could become expensive.

In their 1994 book *The Truth About the UFO Crash at Roswell*, Kevin Randall and Donald Schmitt discount the notion that an experimental aircraft caused the Roswell wreckage. "A craft classified as top secret in 1947 would no longer be classified today," they write. Maybe. But what about the crash of a drone aircraft involved with measuring or delivering health-impacting substances? Such an event would, in all likelihood, remain classified -- for excellent reasons involving lawyers, dollars, headlines, and national pride.

Can I prove this proposed solution to the Roswell enigma? No. Despite Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary's admirable efforts to release the files on radiation test data, the documentary record concerning aerial delivery systems remains sparse and frustrating. Interestingly, the Air Force and the General Accounting Office specifically state that they did not examine Department of Energy records during their re-investigation of Roswell. No "smoking gun" document conclusively substantiates the Roswell hypothesis outlined here, and I doubt that such an incriminating piece of paper will ever come to light.

Which brings us, finally, to the question of standards of proof. Kevin Randle has said of the Mogul theory (which, I agree, does not suffice) that it will remain unproven until someone can produce a document demonstrating that just such a balloon came down on Brazel's ranch. Fair enough. On the other hand, neither Kevin Randle nor anyone else in the ufological community has produced an authentic document demonstrating that an extraterrestrial craft came down at Roswell. Thus, by his own high standards, Randle declares the case unresolved. Roswell has not transmuted the extraterrestrial hypothesis into an established fact -- despite the rather smug claims some have made -- and the mystery therefore

remains open to other proposed solutions, such as the one outlined here.

The "drone warfare" theory outlined in the preceding pages does not give us the final answer, but I consider it the most promising line of inquiry. Admittedly, my analysis of the Roswell crash depends on circumstantial evidence and a fair amount of (I hope) reasonable surmise. 'Too much surmise,' some will aver, and perhaps they are right. However, we are within our rights to draw logical inferences from five indisputable facts - five facts which ufologists should consider carefully:

1. Secret, experimental high-altitude drones did exist in 1947.
2. Military planners considered such drones the best means to deliver toxic agents.
3. Open-air tests involving decidedly unhealthful substances have occurred in many locales, particularly in New Mexico.
4. Drones have crashed in New Mexico.
5. The military and the government have always greatly feared the legal consequences of civilian experimentation, and have gone to great lengths to keep their tests secret.

I believe that one such test came to a premature halt over a ranch near Roswell, New Mexico. Of course, if my reconstruction is accurate, the Pentagon would have no reason to confirm it, and every reason to maintain a cover-up.

[BACK](#)